

PAUL ON WINNING TRAIL

■ by TONY LEWIS

PAUL NICHOLLS knows how to keep it in the family after scoring for the second time in a week with a full-brother to Gold Cup treble hero Best Mate at Wincanton yesterday.

Having struck with the quirky Cornish Rebel at Newbury on Sunday, it was the turn of the equally-enigmatic Inca Trail to come home in front as he benefited from an exemplary Ruby Walsh ride.

Marred

It was the first leg of a 72-1 triple for trainer and jockey at their local track and they will be hoping for even bigger success at Sandown tomorrow with Azertyuiop who faces six opponents in the Tingle Creek.

Nicholls and Walsh completed a double when Island Stream (11-2) quickened up best.

The race was marred by a pile-up at the third-last, where Crossbow Creek fell and brought down favourite Monticelli and Prince Of Persia. Happily, all three jockeys

were able to walk back to the weighing room, although Mick Fitzgerald suffered lacerations to his face and missed his remaining rides, as did Tom Scudamore, who picked up cuts and bruises to his legs.

The news was worse for conditional Robert Walford, who sustained a suspected fractured left ankle when unseated from Avas Delight at the next flight, and he was taken to Dorchester Hospital for X-rays.

The treble came up when Patches made a successful chasing debut.

Philip Hobbs yesterday revealed that Rooster Booster will run in the totesport Bula Hurdle at Cheltenham on December 11.

The 2003 champion hurdler took the Grade Two contest two years ago and did little wrong on his return to action at Prestbury Park last month when, giving weight away all round, he finished fourth to Accordion Etoile at Leicester yesterday.

TONY McCoy yesterday refuted suggestions that he would not continue as number one rider at Jonjo O'Neill's Jackdaws Castle yard if the stable did not "move up".

The record-breaking champion jump jockey left top trainer Martin Pipe after eight highly successful seasons to join O'Neill.

He had been quoted as saying: "As far as I'm concerned, Jackdaws Castle has to move up, and if it doesn't do that, then I don't want to be there. Simple as that. But I know Jonjo wants it, too."

In the wake of the quotes, McCoy said: "Somebody put in that I said I didn't want to be at Jackdaws, which is total nonsense."

"I love working for Jonjo. He's a great trainer. It made it look like I was in a bit of a strop because we weren't having as many winners as other people, but the winners will come." And he completed a double at

Leicester yesterday.



ARRAY UP: Tony McCoy guides Arrayou home

SANDOWN: HEAR IT ON 09055 141 601 (611)

1.00 williamhillcasino.com NOVICES' HANDICAP CHASE

Class D (17 fences) 2m4f/1 (6 runners) £10,192

BOBOSH (18)(D,F,G,S) R.Dickin 8 11 12.....B.Hitchcott *89

MELFORD (23)(G) Miss H Knight 6 11 6.....T.J.Murphy 84

SILVER INNIGOT (22)(G) Mr D Jacob (7) —

STERLING DOT COM (213)(D,G,S) A.Carroll 8 10 11.....C.Llewellyn 77

MANBOW (20)(G) M.D.Hammond 6 10 11.....A.Dobbin 56

FATHER ABRAHAM (9)(D,S) P.O'Brien 6 6 44.....S.Durack 71

Star Betting—2 Meadow, 3 Sterling Dot Com, Father Abraham, 7 Bobbosh, 12 Silver Innigot.

2003: Arc El Ciel, 5-9-4, (C Catlin, 20-1) Stef Liddiard, drawn (9), 10 ran.

STARFORM

Mandy's son, a four-time winner after being Inland Run at Wincanton, is set to be progressing. Melford had a nice run round when 5th to Big King at Newbury and should improve for that. Silver Innigot was fifth in an amateurs' handicap hurdle at Taunton and doesn't look overburdened in this company. Bobbosh was 8th to Vista Verde at Leicester. In May but could take a major hand in this company despite the absence.

S'FORM: FATHER ABRAHAM Danger: Sterling Dot Com

1.30 BB SOUTHERN COUNTIES RADIO JUVENILE NOVICES' HURDLE

(8 flights) 2m1f/1 (9 runners) £6,841

PAPINI (23)(D,G) N.Henderson 11 4.....M.A.Fitzgerald 79

CALOMERIA (20)(D2,S) D.McCain 11.....A.Dobbin *81

HUNORISK (58)(S) G.Macarie (PR) 11.....B.Gicquel —

FRED ASTOR (14) F.Doumen (PR) 11.....D.Gallagher —

FU FIGHTER (13) C.Popham 11 0.....44

HOH NELSON (68)(B') C.Mann 10 11.....D.Crosse (3) 28

LUNAR EXIT (24) Lady Herries 11 0.....L.Asperl 53

PANGLOSS (18)(V') G.L.Mccone 11 0.....P.Hide 30

TANK (F64) Miss S.West 11 0.....J.Goldstein —

Star Betting—7-4 Papini, 3 Hunoris, 11-2 Calomeria, 6 Fred Astor, 8 Lunar, 12 Hoh Nelson, 16 Pangloss, 66 others.

2003: Nawoo, 3-11-0, (L Asperl, 9-4) P.Cundell, 6 ran.

STARFORM

Hoh Nelson was a stepper on the Flat and this ex-German horse looks destined to better things. Lunar Exit seems to be on the way to being a Derby Cox at Huntingdon and is sure to improve. Hunoris was 2nd of 17, 4l behind Nan's Catch at Auteuil and the other French raider Fred Astor weakened from last to be 7th of 18 16 behind Ero De Baume at Enghien. Papini was stepped up in class at Cheltenham but was a well beaten 6th to Cerium, but is

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Geraint proves he's a winner

■ by RODNEY WHITE

WICKET-KEEPER
Geraint Jones is ready to prove he can really hack it as a one-day batsman after his record-busting exploits put England on course for a 4-0 whitewash series win over Zimbabwe.

The Kent man has proved himself at Test level, hammering a century in only his third match, at Headingly.

However, he had struggled to make an impact in the international limited-overs game until his heroics with Kevin Pietersen on Wednesday put England 2-0 up in the series.

England were struggling at 121-5 until Geraint came in to blast 66 off 46 balls during a record sixth-wicket partnership of 120 with man of the match Pietersen.

It was his first-century at one-day international level and the highest score by an England wicketkeeper since Alec Stewart hit an unbeaten 87 against Bangladesh in Nairobi four years ago.

Time

"At the stage I went in we could have been bowled out quite cheaply and it would have been quite embarrassing," said Jones.

"Luckily it set up a good situation for myself to prove I can play in one-day cricket."

"I haven't been given the situation to go out and show what I can do with a good wicket and plenty of time to bat."

"I don't get that opportunity that often where I bat, but that's the nature of the side when we're at full strength."

"There are some great players up ahead of me so I'm happy batting at No. 7 at the moment. I'd like to think I'm established now."

England had a work-out in Harare yesterday before their short flight to Bulawayo where they will face back-to-back matches at the Queen's Club this weekend to complete the series.

Wilko's return put off

ROB ANDREW has ruled out an imminent return for England captain Jonny Wilkinson and refused to speculate on when the World Cup-winning fly-half will next play.

Wilkinson had hinted earlier this week that he could be available to play for Newcastle against Edinburgh in Sunday's Heineken Cup.

However, Wilkinson yesterday delayed his comeback from injury and Andrew, Newcastle's director of rugby, does not predict a quick return.

Andrew explained:

Olympic hero back in ring tonight with vow to his fans



AMIR KHAN climbs into the ring for his first fight since the Olympic Games tonight admitting: The pressure's really on me now!

His lightweight silver medal in Athens three months ago has turned the likeable 17-year-old lad from Bolton into a national hero and a full house will watch him compete for England against the USA in Liverpool tonight.

Khan's fight has attracted so much attention that it will be screened live on the BBC and he said: "I know that everybody will be looking for me to perform."

"But that's something I just have to deal with. I am getting used to it and you have to remember that, as our sole representative at the Olympics, the pressure was also on me there."

The Olympia Stadium in Liverpool, which would normally be sparsely attended, has sold more than 1,500 tickets.

Tough

Khan added: "I'm just pleased that amateur boxing is now on such a high."

"I've got to focus on my fight now and do the best job I can. That's the way I treated each fight in the Olympics and I'll be going about this in the same way."

"The Americans are always tough so we won't be underestimating anyone on what should be a great night for the fans. I am really looking forward to it." Despite the continued

■ by KEVIN FRANCIS

attention of boxing promoters clamouring for him to turn professional, Khan is still determined to remain in the amateur ranks and compete in the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

He explained: "I am still very young and, although the Olympics was marvellous to me, I know that I still have a lot to learn, so I am happy to stay amateur for now."

"I just want to improve myself over the next few years and get more and more experience."

"By the end of this month I will have my programme mapped out for next year and can hopefully take myself up to another level."

"As for turning professional, I repeat that I am still young and there is plenty of time for that to happen in the future."

GLORY BOY: Amir Khan celebrates his semi-final win over Serik Yeleuov in Athens

Hatt happy to risk it

RICKY HATTON admits he is risking everything by defending his WBU belt against American Ray Oliveira at London's ExCel Arena tomorrow week. Defeat would scupper his hopes of challenging Kostya Tszyu for the IBF belt early next year. Promoter Frank Warren believes he is

close to securing the fight for Hatton, who insisted yesterday: "If you believe that you're the best, you shouldn't be looking at dodging anybody."

"You are always going to have one eye on the big fight but I've known in all my 37 fights that if I came unstuck then that dream goes further away."

SPORTWORD

ACROSS

- Shameful member of the 1,000 Guineas in 1996 (5)
- Poborsky, Czech Republic forward once with Man United (5)
- Ceszagnie, WBO super-middleweight champion (3)
- Roberto, Argentina centre-back (5)
- Kormendi, swimming champion at the 1972 Olympics (5)
- Aouita, mens 5,000 metres Olympic champion in 1984 (4)
- Ridley, West Indies wicketkeeper (6)
- Henri, Celtic's on-loan Wolves and Senegal forward (6)
- Racing football team from Argentina (4)
- Boston, mens long jump Olympic champion in 1960 (5)
- Grand National winner in 1966 (5)
- Jones, ladies singles Wimbledon champion in 1969 (3)
- Venue of the Oaks (5)
- Villa, Premiership club (5)

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5 FOR FUN

- Name the first Australian city to host the Summer Olympics.
- Which current England rugby union international is sometimes called 'Billy Whiz'?
- Which club, in 1894, were the first to win the FA Cup while not in the First Division?
- Which former Leeds and England centre-back was nicknamed 'The Giraffe'?
- Which famous golfing contest first took place in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1927?

ANSWERS: See Page 77

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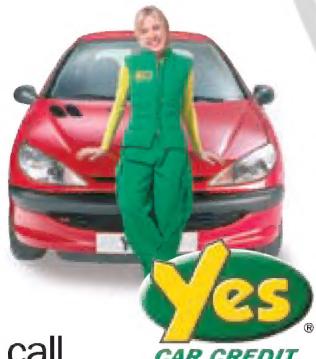
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Mac's keen on Kev

■ by IAN MURTAGH

STEVE McCCLAREN could step up his interest in Scotland defender Kevin McNaughton after confirming he will buy in the January sales.

Middlesbrough have been checking the 22-year-old Aberdeen left-back recently and McLaren admitted yesterday he has a problem in that position.

First-choice Franck Queudrue is facing a three-match ban and Boro are short on left-sided cover.

McClaren confirmed he will talk to chairman Steve Gibson and chief executive Keith Lamb about spending on players in the New Year window.

Thin

"I will be looking to have a chat to see what can be done," said the Boro boss. "It's an area where we don't have natural cover."

"The squad is a bit thin and it's an opportunity for this club to build on what we've already established."

"We have 25 points from 15 games and want to build on that and get better."

McClaren wants a midfielder to replace Gaizka Mendieta, who is out until next season after knee surgery, but Chelsea will reject any loan move for Geremi who has already had one Riverside spell.

**SERIOUSLY
football**

Jon sweats on injury scan

WOODY'S CRUNCH

JONATHAN WOODGATE will learn in the next two weeks if he remains on course to make his Real Madrid debut in January.

The England defender is set to have a scan on his troublesome left thigh and if the results are good he could be playing in the New Year.

Woodgate was due to make his first competitive appearance on October 12 in a friendly but he broke down in training just days before and was sent to top Colorado doctor John Bergfeld.

The US specialist told him he did not need immediate surgery but if after 10 weeks there were problems he would need to go back under the knife.

Positive

Bergfeld said: "If this second rehabilitation programme does not succeed surgery would be indicated."

Everything has gone well for Woodgate since but he needs a positive scan result to confirm he is on course.

While Woodgate waits for news, off the pitch he has settled well at the Bernabeu according to Michael Owen.

Owen said: "The lads have all taken to Jonathan. His Spanish is really coming on and he looks really, really happy."

As part of a Real Madrid tradition, new boys Owen and Woodgate bought 30 of

■ from PETE JENSON in Madrid

their team-mates dinner this week. They all met up for a meal at the exclusive Meson Txistu restaurant, where the squad discussed next Wednesday's crucial Champions League group decider with Roma.

Speaking about the way Woodgate has dealt with his injury setback, Owen added: "I think when you are injured in the first few days reality sinks in but after that it's fine and now he's got a target in his mind and he is pressing towards that."

"It was a sickening blow for him because he is a fantastic player. When he came back he looked really good and played really well during the full training sessions that he had."

"It's frustrating for him but with an injury, once you get your head around it after that you just focus on the target."

Owen has himself received praise from Real Madrid star Guti.

In an interview to celebrate his nine years at the Bernabeu the Spanish midfielder said: "Owen is very integrated in the squad now."

"He deserves a lot of credit because with the few minutes he has had on the pitch he has scored decisive goals."



REAL DEAL: Woodgate is close to a return

Cats to keep cream

■ by IAN MURTAGH

MICK McCARTHY last night issued a hands-off warning to Premiership clubs eyeing Sunderland's top stars.

High-flying Everton are weighing up a double swoop for Julio Arca and George McCartney in the New Year but, despite the Black Cats' crippling debt, McCarthy has been assured he does not have to sell his prize assets.

His in-form Sunderland side entertain West Ham tomorrow with a chance of topping the Championship for the first time since relegation 18 months ago.

Delighted

And McCarthy is anticipating a surge of interest in his players in the months ahead, with scouts already flocking to the Stadium of Light.

But he warned: "You can look but don't touch."

Sunderland have won six of their last seven league games and McCarthy added: "I'm delighted my players are attracting interest, but they're not going anywhere. Why would I want to lose anyone?"

"George and Julio have just signed new deals and like everyone else here, they should be looking to play in the Premiership with Sunderland."

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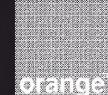
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SERIOUSLY
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West Brom star gets one last chance

KOU MUST SORT IT

BRYAN ROBSON has told £2m outcast Jason Koumas to prove he can hack it in the big time.

The Welsh international midfielder had to train with the kids after a row with former boss Gary Megson and hasn't been able to get back in the side.

Koumas was the club's £2.25m record signing when he joined from Tranmere.

Robson is set to prune his squad by about six or seven players but will give Koumas a chance.

The West Brom boss said: "He fell out

■ by DAVE ARMITAGE

with the previous manager and when I came here I felt his confidence was down and he'd lost the edge off his fitness because he'd been training with the kids.

Plans

"He hadn't been involved. I've had a chat with him and told him he's got to work very hard at his training to impress us here."

"With all the ability he's got, he should be able to be a big influence here."

"That's up to him, but to be fair to him he's looked nice and bright this week and if he continues with that his chance will come."

"As a player you want to know if you are in a new manager's plans but I need him to be on top of his game."

"I don't know his character but he hasn't caused me a minute's problem since I've been here."

BRYAN Robson has accused Sheffield United boss Neil Warnock of using under-hand tactics in an attempt to lure Geoff Horsfield to Bramall Lane.

Warnock has made no secret that he wants the former Birmingham forward. But new West Brom boss Robson has warned him off.

Robson said: "If you ask Geoff Horsfield would he rather play in the Premiership or Championship then what do you think his answer would be?"

"We have got four strikers at the club and I'm certain that until the transfer window opens there won't be anybody leaving. I think this is just a case of a First Division manager being mischievous."



ULTIMATUM: Koumas has had his orders

NATIONAL PRIDE:
New boss Walter Smith holds up the Scotland jersey



Walt wants Dunc back

WALTER SMITH wants veteran striker Duncan Ferguson to end his feud with the Scottish FA and play for his country again.

Smith, who bossed Ferguson, 32, at Rangers and Everton, made his plea after being unveiled as the new Scotland manager.

The 56-year-old wants an amnesty for players who have fallen out of favour as he tries to revive Scotland's battered reputation.

Smith said: "Some players have said they won't play for Scotland again. I don't know the reasons."

■ by TOM BAXTER

If someone can tell me, including the players themselves, then I will have a better idea of how to deal with that."

Talent

Smith has signed a four-year contract and insists he has got enough good players to be a success.

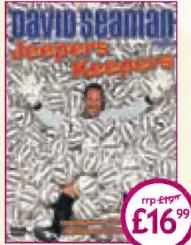
He said: "Scotland may not have the individual talent that we used to have but I still think there are a lot of good players in the

set-up. There are also a lot who would respond well to being involved in a more solid team.

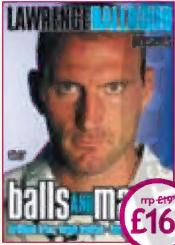
"If you can get a togetherness in the group then you can have a lot that respond well and then you can achieve success."

Smith got the job ahead of people's favourite Gordon Strachan, who was one of three other candidates interviewed.

Balls, Mauls and Automobiles



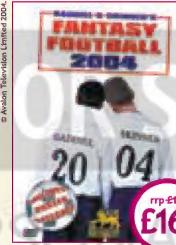
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Back in top Nick

KEVIN KEEGAN is ready to loan out fit-again Nicky Weaver in a bid to speed up a first-team return for the injury-ravaged Manchester City keeper.

Former England Under-21 star Weaver has had five knee operations since limping out of City's First Division clash with Birmingham in March 2002.

And the 25-year-old was forced to fly out to the USA earlier this year to undergo a revolutionary cartilage transplant in a last-ditch bid to save his career.

Keegan has pencilled Weaver in for a reserve team clash against Liverpool next Tuesday following his impressive return to training.

And the City boss admits he is keen to seal a loan switch for Weaver in order to boost his recovery.

Keegan said: "Weavs is ready to play and the Liverpool game is one we have had earmarked for

■ by GEORGE SCOTT

him for quite some time. He has been like a breath of fresh air around the place.

"He has worked very hard and now he just needs some games.

"But it might be that we loan him out in the New Year for a month.

"He has got vast experience but he hasn't played for nearly two years."



UP FOR LOAN: Weaver

SVEN MARK

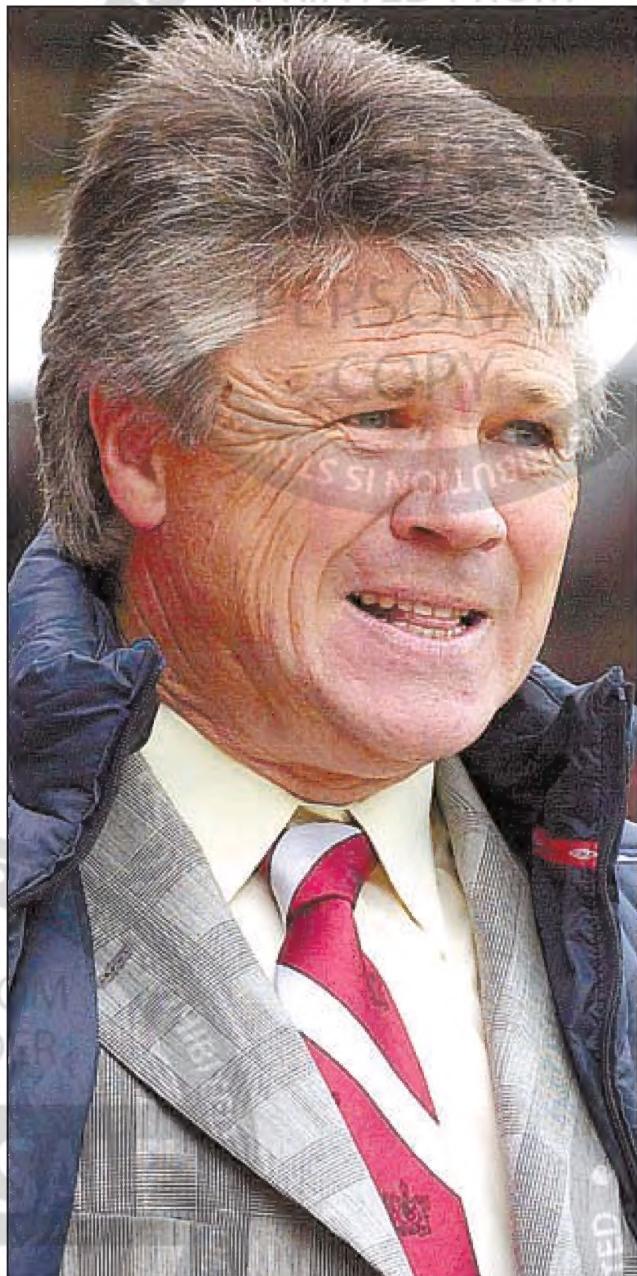
ENGLAND will prepare for the final stages of their 2006 World Cup qualifying campaign with a friendly in Denmark next August.

England have opted to play the friendly so early into the domestic season as they will face key qualifying matches against Wales and Northern Ireland in September.

And while some clubs may be unhappy at the friendly, England boss Sven Goran Eriksson believes the trip on August 17 will provide excellent preparation for his squad.

SERIOUSLY
football

FA CUP SPECIAL:



TO THE RESCUE: Steve Perryman is helping to keep Exeter alive

Lamps the man for Dan

STEVENAGE midfielder Dannie Bulman is dreaming of a third-round FA Cup clash against Frank Lampard - so he can compare the Chelsea midfielder to Steven Gerrard.

Bulman will be a key man for Stevenage tomorrow as they take on Rochdale at home looking for a place in the next round when the Premiership giants go into the hat for the first time.

And the 25-year-old Chelsea fan is keen to pit his wits against the best again, having played for Wycombe in an FA Cup semi-final against Liverpool in 2001.

Crazy

Bulman explained: "The run we had with Wycombe was just crazy and you don't appreciate it until it is all over."

"We were not a particularly great side but we kept pulling out these great performances and the next thing we were playing Liverpool.

"I can't remember much but one memo-

ry that has stuck with me is lining up for the kick-off and seeing Michael Owen and Robbie Fowler in front of me.

"We did okay until a certain Steven Gerrard came off the bench midway through the second-half. He was only just breaking into the team back then but he came on and changed the match.

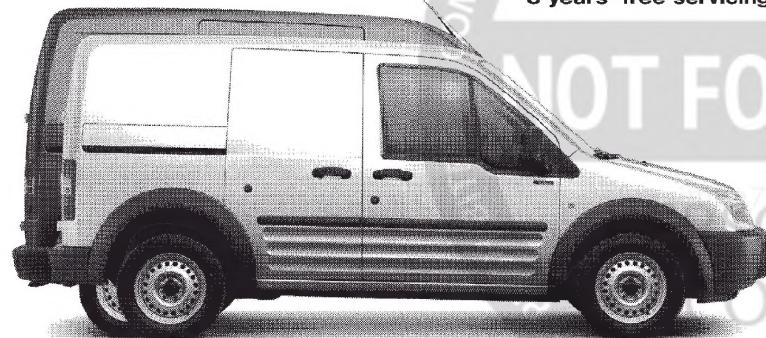
"I'm a Chelsea fan myself but I've never had the chance to play at Stamford Bridge. I think the closest I have come is when I went on a stadium tour when I was about 12."

"It would be great to get through to the third round and get a really big club like Chelsea. If that happened, I would get the chance to see what Frank Lampard is like to play against."

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Perryman's happy to work for nothing

THIS JOB IS DEVON SENT

WHEN you go to meet Steve Perryman, you wonder: Where is the catch?

Why is one of the game's legends, with 654 league games and 19 years of the Tottenham glory era behind him, working for nothing for Exeter?

Why is a man with a better management record in Japan than Arsene Wenger happy to give his time and advice as director of football to a struggling club in the Conference... for no more reward than the enjoyment of staying in the game?

And why, at the age of 53, is he happy to have turned his back on his hopes of breaking into the big time as a boss?

Surely in this age of greedy football directors, managers and players there has to be an angle for him somewhere?

Then you talk to him and realise there isn't.

Perryman will watch his side take on Doncaster in the FA Cup second round tomorrow as just an honest football bloke who happens to have worked hard enough to have made a fortune from the game and is ready to put something back in.

Happy

It all makes him an oddity among the bosses hoping to land a place in the FA Cup's third round draw this weekend. While the others are working out the Sky money, he's reaching for the stars.

Perryman has moved his family and two young daughters to the West Country and is loving the laid back lifestyle.

He explained: "I helped them out two years ago when I first came back from Japan and it looked as if they would get relegated. Then they asked if I would come back and help some more."

"They didn't have any extra money to pay anybody and I just felt I'd done well out of football and it was time to give something back.

"I started travelling once or twice a week from my home in Buckinghamshire and then just realised what a good lifestyle was available down here and decided to move.

"I'm very lucky. Because of what happened out in Japan, I don't need to work.

"So having the football club to work for has become a nice interest for me. I've never been so happy."

Cream

What happened in Japan was nearly seven years of fantastic success - he won the Championship and the Asian Cup-Winners Cup with Shimizu.

That was more than Wenger achieved during his stint in the Far East.

But while the studious Frenchman was invited to take over at Arsenal, Perryman just found he'd been forgotten.

He said: "I thought football in England had evolved enough, bearing in mind that foreign is now fashionable for managers, to recognise the strength of my record."

"I thought they would see it as a great combination of



TURNING JAPANESE: Steve celebrates Shimizu's title win

■ by RALPH ELLIS

somebody English born and bred who had gone and worked with Brazilian players against some of the cream of the world.

I also thought that spending 19 years with one club and being captain through many successes would say something to clubs. I thought it would have been an appealing package.

"Instead I must have written about a zillion letters and mostly never got a reply.

In the end I've realised I'm lucky that I can pick and choose what I do and that means I can come to Exeter with exactly the right approach.

"It's an amazing club that has been kept in business only by the will and effort of the supporters.

"I'm just the most high profile of 2,000 volunteers who are giving either their time or their money to keep it alive.

"Being at Exeter gives me back the feeling about football that I first had as a 15-year-old walking through the gates at White Hart Lane."

Gunning for dream draw

ARSENAL season-ticket holder Gareth Baldwin will put on his other hat tomorrow, as chairman of Histon - knowing he is only one win away from a possible match-up with his Premiership heroes.

Baldwin insists the Southern League Premier Division side is his priority and he is only able to travel down to London to see his beloved Gunners on rare occasions.

But he is dreaming of the chance of combining his two loves if Histon can overcome seasoned FA Cup shock-artists Yeovil Town - and a gap of 66 league positions - at the Glassword Stadium tomorrow.

Fantastic

"It's a dream I know but I am an Arsenal season ticket holder and because of Histon I am only get there 10 times a season or so," said Baldwin. "So Arsenal would be the ideal fixture - out of this world."

"I love Arsenal and the players are fantastic. It would be great to compare boardrooms. But Yeovil are a strong team. If you look at the gap between us in terms of leagues then you would think 2-0 to them, easy."

"But I always believe we will score goals and, I think maybe 1-1, with a replay at their place - by then we would know who we were facing in the third round!"

Baldwin believes Histon's players will be lifted by Match Of The Day cameras at tomorrow's game following their defeat of League Two Shrewsbury in the last round.

Fantastic

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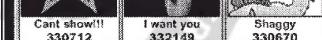


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SERIOUSLY football Kan clanger leaves boss speechless

FREDI GETS THE COLD SHOULDER



HAND OF CLOD: Freddi Kanoute concedes the crucial penalty which saw Spurs cup hopes crash

DESPAIR: Kanoute after his penalty miss

■ by SCOTT COLEMAN

SPURS boss Martin Jol is so furious with striker Freddi Kanoute he still hasn't spoken to him about the crazy hand-ball which cost them a place in the Carling Cup semi-finals.

Jol could not bring himself to speak to the Mali international in training yesterday.

His blood was still boiling over the bizarre gaffe that cost Tottenham victory over Liverpool with only three minutes of extra-time left at White Hart Lane on Wednesday night.

Jol was gobsmacked to see Kanoute attempt to punch away a corner to present Liverpool's Florent Sinama-Pongolle with an equalising penalty.

The French youngster then notched the winner in Liverpool's 4-3 spot-kick shoot-out victory.

Unforgivable

An angry Jol said: "I was pretty ****ed off but so was Freddi. He was very disappointed and so he should be."

"I didn't speak to Freddi today, only just said 'hello' like I do with all the players. Tomorrow, we'll talk about it."

"I didn't think today was the right moment. I said yesterday it was unforgivable, but I have forgiven him. I have to."

"We have to move on and we have to learn from this. We will keep it internal and we will move on."

Jol will tell his whole squad to cut out the cock-ups saying: "I think we have a good group of players, but I have told them we need also to have a top mentality. At the moment we are punishing ourselves."

"In every team there is someone like Freddi. You think 'what is he doing?' And they do it."

"But it has been other players too. Jermain Defoe knew it would be a booking to take his shirt off when he scored against Middlesbrough, but he still did it and now he will be suspended."

"The Arsenal game was the same. Nourredine Naybet made a mistake and so did Paul Robinson."

"Football is all about mistakes, but these mistakes you can avoid."

Information Station

UEFA Cup

Group E

Aigaleo	(1)	Lazio	(2)	2
Chloro	3	Muzzi	12, 26	Alt: 1,000
Agris 55	3	Villarreal	3	5
B Belgrade	(0)	Villarreal	(1)	1
Tonic 65	(0)	Cazorla	17	26,000

Group F

AZ Alkmaar	(1)	Rangers	(0)	0
Landzaat	7	Alt: 8,000		
Auxerre	(4)	Amica Wronki	(1)	1
Mignot 1	3	Krysztofow	17	
Pieron 23, 26	3	Alt: 7,000		
Kalou 58	3	Amica Wronki	19	

Group G

Beveren	(0)	Benfica	(2)	3
		Simao (pen)		
		Zahovic 19, 59		
		Alt: 8,000		
(Sent off: C Boubacon, Beveren - 3)				
Din Zagreb	(1)	Heerenveen	(0)	2
Bonjek 15	3	Yildirim 86		
Praotic 57	3	Huntelaar 89 (pen)		
		Alt: 12,000		
(Sent off: S Pinto, Aachen - 2)				
Spurs	(2)	AEK Athens	(1)	2
Baptista 18, 89 (pen)	3	Liberopoulos 9		
Antonito 28	3	Tzortzopoulos 47		
		Alt: 29,000		

Group H

Alem Aachen	(1)	Zenit SP	(1)	2
Maier 25	3	Radimov 33 (pen)		
Blank 89 (pen)	3	Caron 76		
		Alt: 25,300		
(Sent off: S Pinto, Aachen - 90)				
Seville	(2)	AEK Athens	(1)	2
Baptista 18, 89 (pen)	3	Antonio 28		
		Tzortzopoulos 47		
		Alt: 29,000		
P W L D F A Pts				
Serbia.....3 2 0 0 6 3 7				
Lille.....3 2 0 1 4 3 6				
Zenit SP.....4 1 2 1 9 6 5				
Alemania Aachen.....3 1 1 1 5 4 4				
AEK Athens.....3 0 0 3 4 14 0				

CHICKEN

SECOND TEST (Kolkata) — Day 5 of 5: South Africa 305 (U Kallis 121, J A Rudolph 61) & 222 (G Smith 71, J Kallis 55; H Singh 7-87), India 411 (V Sehwag 88, R Dravid 80) & 202, India won by 8 wkt, and win series 1-0.

GOLF

OMEGA HONG KONG OPEN—1st Rnd (GB & Ire unless stated): 64 A Grocott (Aus) 65 M A Jimenez (Spa) 66 P Harrington (Ire) 67 S Schwartzel (SA) 68 G Havret (Fra) 69 Saltus (US), D Fung (HK), T Adinai (Aus), S Barr (Aus), H Kahlon (Ind), 67 D Cavers (US), L Wen-chang (Chn), T Sirot (Tha), P Del Olmo (Mex), J Olazabal (Spa), T Judas (Tha), Lim 68 (Pen), 69 A Martin (Spa), R-J Denkovi (Bol), B Lane, S Hansen (Den), M Mamant (Sin), T Oh (Kor), G Ghei (Ind), S Dodd, L Slattery, T Pilkaradis (Aus), C Joon (Kor), A Fraser (Aus), L Chih-hung (Sin), J Cheetham, R Russell (Eng).

MEETUP CHALLENGE (San City)—1st Rnd (US unless stated): 70 R Goosen (SA), L Westwood (Eng), S Appleby (Aus), E Els (SA), 71 C Dil Marco (Pen), N Price (Zim), 74 J Furyk, T Hamilton, 75 F Jacobson (USA), 76 Haas, 80 C Campbell (Garcia) (Spa).

SNOKER

MALTA CUP (Prestwich)—3rd Qualifying Round M (Eng) bt C (Eng) bt M Judge (Ire) 5-1, S Murphy (Eng) bt A Davies (Wal) 5-1, R Day (Wal) bt J Jorga (Eng) 5-2, B Hawkins (Eng) bt J Michie (Eng) 5-1, T Ford (Eng) bt D Harold (Eng) 5-4, S Hicks (Eng) bt S Bingham (Eng) 5-4, S Petman (Eng) bt S Ali (Pak) 5-1, J Wattana (Tha) bt J Delaney (Ire) 5-4, N Bond (Eng) bt S Storey (Eng) 5-3, J Burnett (Eng) bt N Doyle (Eng) 5-4, R McEvedy (Eng) bt B Morgan (Eng) 5-4, R Hull (Eng) bt M Campbell (Eng) 5-4, N Robertson (Aus) bt F O'Brien (Ire) 5-4.

TODAY'S DIARY

FOOTBALL

FA Cup Second Round Cambridge City v MK Dons (7.45)... Sunthorpe Masterlist Welsh Prem (7.30); Haverhill Rovers v Aberystwyth, New CD v Caernarfon.

BASKETBALL

BBL Cheshire vs Milton Keynes vs Chester (7.30).

BOXING

Amateur International (Liverpool): England v USA Open.

GOLF

Hong Kong Open.

RUGBY UNION

Heineken Cup—Pool A: Castres v Munster (7.30).

European Cup—2nd Rnd, 1st Leg: Beziers v Grenoble (6.30).

YESTERDAY'S SPORTWORD

ACROSS: 1 Deepdale, 7 Rives, 8 Kyran, 9 Harvey, 10 Lyle, 12 Bird, 14 Carroll, 17 Layer, 18 Kelso, 19 Ian Harte.

DOWN: 1 Devil, 2 Easter, 3 Duke,

4 Larry, 5 Archibald, 6 Underwood,

11 Walker, 13 Reyna, 15 Riise, 16 Wreh.

FOR FUN ANSWERS

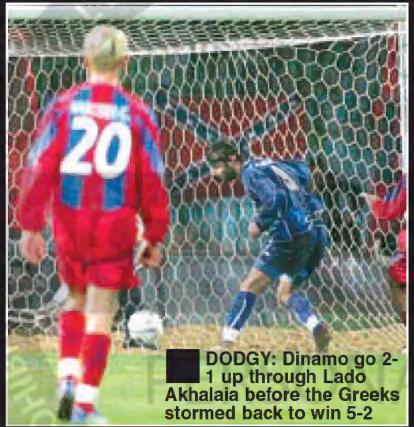
1 Melbourne (1956), 2 Jason Robinson, 3 Notts County, 4 Jack Charlton, 5 The Ryder Cup.

DANNY FULLBROOK is on holiday. Don't miss DANNY OLD GAME next Friday

KEVIN KEEGAN has shelved contract talks with Steve McManaman at Manchester City until the former England star beats his Achilles injury.

CRYSTAL PALACE are holding talks with West Ham with a view to signing unsettled striker Bobby Zamora in the transfer window.

KEVIN KEEGAN has shelved contract talks with Steve McManaman at Manchester City until the former England star beats his Achilles injury.



DODGY: Dinamo go 2-1 up through Lado Akhalaia before the Greeks stormed back to win 5-2

UEFA tie 'fix' say bookies

From Back Page

all of the players on the pitch looked at each other in complete astonishment. Soon after that Panionios scored two goals. There is no doubt that a betting coup has taken place.

"We think UEFA should act quickly and with force. We are willing to talk to them, but they do not seem willing to talk to us."

"What was so extraordinary was that this involved predicting the half-time result and the full-time result which are usually at odds of 28-1 or 33-1."

"You can bet all over the world in Asia, Australia everywhere. God knows how much money has been made and lost. It must be in millions."

Joe Samarez Smith, a gambling consultant for Sports Gaming, said: "It was the most suspicious betting pattern on football I have seen in the last decade."

Odds

Nigel Seeley, of bookmakers Stan James, said that even when they cut the odds right down, people were still trying to place bets.

He added: "We saw 25 times as much interest on that game as we would normally see on an average UEFA Cup game."

UEFA have not ruled out an investigation, however, and a spokesman said: "As it stands at the moment we are gathering information before we decide whether or not to investigate."

Gray has eye on key job

■ by DAVE ARMITAGE

STUART GRAY is being handed a last-ditch chance to land the biggest Christmas gift of his life - the keys to the Molineux manager's office.

Gray has been caretaker for the last five games and could get a prolonged shot at the job as an imminent appointment is unlikely.

It's over a month since Dave Jones was shown the door and with top candidate Harry Redknapp set to turn his nose up at a move north, Gray knows he has to make the most of his chance.

Talks

Wolves have taken seven points under Gray and chairman Rick Hayward held talks with him last night to outline the latest situation.

Said Hayward: "It would be nice to get someone in by Christmas but we have to be patient."

"We will take our time and we will back Stuart, who has done an excellent job for us, all the way."

ASTON VILLA skipper Olof Mellberg has rushed to Lee Hendrie's defence.

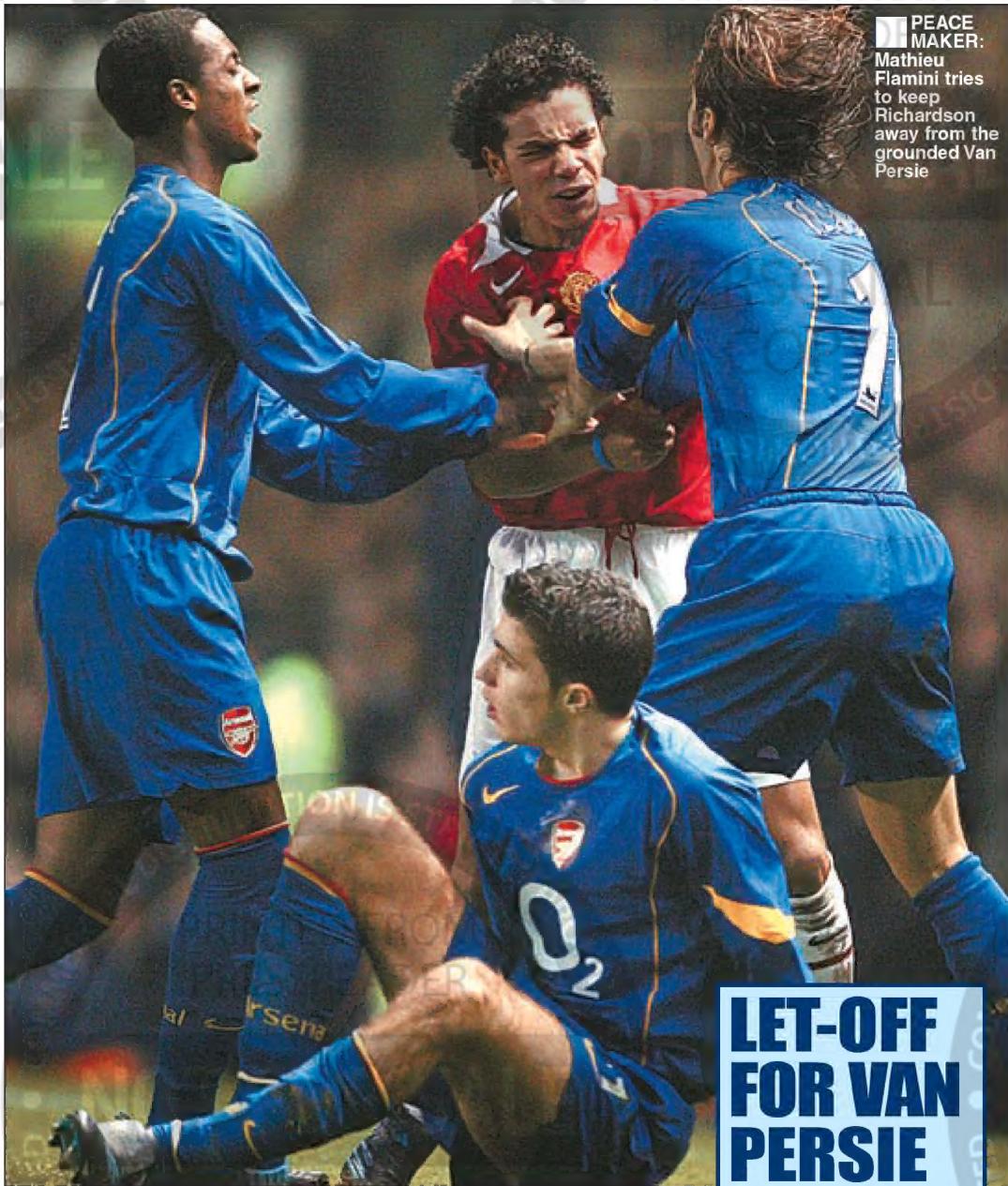
Hendrie was banned for three games after his sending off for violent conduct at Manchester City for feigning a head butt at Danny Mills.

The FA have also charged the midfielder with improper conduct for failing to leave the pitch promptly after his red card from referee Mike Riley.

But Mellberg said: "He was just desperate to tell the referee what had happened because he felt he may have been unsighted."

**SERIOUSLY
football**

Phil's got staying power as he



PEACE MAKER: Mathieu Flamini tries to keep Richardson away from the grounded Van Persie

Wigley agony

■ by PETER WHITE

SOUTHAMPTON head coach Steve Wigley admits he faces an agonising decision over which keeper to pick for tomorrow's Premiership game at Manchester United.

Regular first choice Antti Niemi is back in full training after a cartilage operation but faces stern competition from Kasey Keller who has impressed during his loan spell from Tottenham.

Fate

Saints will be trying to upset the odds at Old Trafford, just as they so nearly did at Arsenal a few weeks ago when a late goal denied them victory.

Wigley knows whichever keeper he picks will have a huge say in his side's fate.

He said: "It will be a massive decision, but for me even to consider Antti he will have to

prove he is 100%. Kasey has done a fabulous job for us, and in a difficult time.

"He came to us just after we had been beaten by Watford, and to get someone of his experience and quality was a massive plus for us. He has played a significant role over these past few weeks.

"We are delighted with his contribution, and what makes it so difficult is because the player I have got coming back is arguably the best keeper in the Premiership."

Niemi is desperate to play at Old Trafford.

"It will be difficult to get a result at United but we said the same thing about the match at Arsenal and so nearly came away with three points, so you never know," he said.



RIVALS: Keller and Niemi

LET-OFF FOR VAN PERSIE

THE FA will not take any action over Robin van Persie's alleged elbow on Kieran Richardson during Arsenal's Carling Cup defeat at Manchester United on Wednesday.

The Arsenal striker will not be punished further to ref Mark Halsey dealing with the matter at the time by showing both players a yellow card.

United boss Sir Alex Ferguson will be infuriated after he demanded the FA look into it.

Intent

In a statement the FA said it had "reviewed the actions of all the players involved in the incident and is satisfied that no further disciplinary action is required."

Van Persie, 21, appeared to elbow the United winger during the quarter-final tie at Old Trafford.

Ferguson said: "The FA must look at it because the boy threw an elbow. I asked the referee why both players had been booked, he said 'for aggressive intent' and told me he hadn't seen the elbow."

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger admitted he considered taking Van Persie off after the clash.

He said: "I did fear it was going to be worse than a yellow card."

VOWS to lead Fergie's kids to Carling Cup glory

NEVER WANT TO LEAVE UNITED

PHIL NEVILLE is ready to snub a January escape from his Manchester United misery to lead Sir Alex Ferguson's young guns to Carling Cup glory.

Neville, 27, has admitted he is increasingly frustrated with his bit-part role at Old Trafford this season.

The England defender has started just three Premiership games for Ferguson this term.

That statistic is baffling, considering Neville signed a new five-year deal during the summer.

Despite his fall from grace Neville has been assured by Ferguson that he still has a key role to play at United.

Focus

Neville has been given the captain's armband in the Carling Cup this season and with United now facing a New Year semi-final crunch against Chelsea, the prospect of leading the club to Cardiff has come into sharp focus.

Middlesbrough, Everton and Blackburn are all keeping tabs on Neville's situation at Old Trafford.

But he was quick to ward them off and admitted he was no rush to leave.

He has also vowed to remain at United and fight his way back into the team, and on a regular basis.

Neville said: "The easy way out for me would be to go and play my football elsewhere."

"But United is still a club I want to play for and the bigger challenge for me is to stay and fight for my place."

"The boss knows that I am frustrated and I wouldn't be a professional if I wasn't."

"I do want to play more, but I want to play more at this club not at any other club."

"I've got a new five-year contract and the boss tells me that he still wants me and he is probably the most important person I should listen to."

A failure to nail down regular football in the United first-team prompted Nicky Butt to quit Old Trafford for Newcastle at the

end of last season but Neville admits he will be happy to remain at the club so long as he is making a regular contribution.

He said: "I captained the side against Arsenal and I was a proud man and I'd like to continue playing for this football club."

"The way I look at it is that there are some great players at this club and it is a great team."

"I've played my part over the years and I have contributed."

"The manager has made sure that I have contributed even though I've not played week in, week out."

"This season has been a little bit different."

"I've not played the amount of games I've done in the past, but I have been assured that I will make a contribution."

"As long as I feel that I am doing that and believe that I am good enough to get into the side, then I will always stay and fight for my place. I am not looking to get away."

Faith

Ferguson now faces the prospect of tackling Jose Mourinho's £100m second-string line-up for a place in next February's Carling Cup final at the Millennium Stadium.

But the United boss said he would not be recalling his big guns for the two-legged semi-final.

Ferguson is delighted at the way his mixture of youngsters and fringe players has helped Manchester United to knock out Arsenal, Crystal Palace and Crewe to reach the last four and he is vowing to keep faith with them for the Chelsea clash.

Ferguson said: "We're in the semi-final, we're one step away from Cardiff and it is great for the young lads."

"To go to Cardiff would be fantastic for them and they will all play in the semi-final."

"I will stick with them, I think they deserve that. They will enjoy it and they will play well."

PHIL'S GOOD:
Neville and
David Bellion
celebrate the
goal against
Arsenal that
took United
to the Carling
Cup semis



■ by MARK OGDEN

Gunners slide

From Back Page

six points from five Premiership games, a Champions League crumble, and a Carling Cup exit back at Old Trafford.

Now Wenger has the task of turning things round and he's starting with a dose of reality.

Arsenal's manager admitted: "We have to be realistic. Last year was the exception, and not the norm."

Behind

"The history of English football will tell you what happened last season won't happen again. It isn't disastrous but I'm not happy at the moment."

Wenger's side are now five points behind Chelsea and have seen Manchester United close the gap behind them from 11 points to four.

On top of that he has a midfield injury crisis and his skipper Patrick

Vieira will be banned from next week's Highbury showdown with the leaders.

Arsenal's boss admitted: "We are below our standard and I'm more worried about that."

"My worries are concentrated purely on what we are doing, more than whether there is one more team up there challenging now Chelsea are stronger alongside United. The problems are on our side."

Wenger won't lose too much sleep at slipping out of the Carling Cup – he fielded a side of kids with an average outfield age of just 19.

But he does know that Highbury's fans need a morale booster from tomorrow's match with Birmingham.

That's followed by Wednesday's must-win Champions League clash with Rosenborg – then the home clash with Jose Mourinho's multi-millionaires from Chelsea.

It's Buly for Sam

■ by TIM GRAY

SAM ALLARDYCE has confirmed he wants to land Russia's Euro 2004 hitman Dimitri Bulykin. The £1m-rated striker is desperate to play in England after an unsuccessful trial at Everton in January and Dynamo Moscow have agreed to sell him to the highest bidder when the transfer window opens.

Bolton boss Allardyce said: "Bulykin is a possibility for us and we will want to have another look at him."

"I don't want people thinking our season is over in January and I've got to deal with it. It looks like the addition of a couple of new players to the squad will help us to progress again."

Bulykin led the line for Russia in Portugal before his side crashed out in the group stages.

Ray Kop bashing

RAY LEWINGTON will be looking to banish the demons of a personal nightmare when Watford play Liverpool in the Carling Cup semi-final in January.

His first managerial trip to Anfield was with Fulham back in 1986 when his side suffered a 10-0 League Cup defeat.

"I was the player-manager and had only been in the job for three months," he recalls. "I have been trying to get it out of my mind ever since."

"I actually did quite well up there when I was just a player."

"I remember Fulham holding Liverpool over two legs in the League Cup back in 1983 and it needed an extra-time goal from Graeme Souness to beat us in the replay."

"But this is a great game for my team and for the younger ones it will be a fantastic experience."

Cud aim is final

CHELSEA keeper Carlo Cudicini is hoping to end his semi-final jinx against Manchester United in the Carling Cup next month.

The 31-year-old Italian missed last season's semi-final loss to Monaco in the Champions League through injury but was in the Chelsea team thumped 5-1 by Spurs in the League Cup two years ago to miss out on a trip to the Millennium Stadium.

Chelsea play United over two legs in January and Cudicini is determined the Blues won't fall at the last fence again.

"We are in another semi-final but I hope that this time we go through and get to the final," he said.

"We want to start this season in the best possible way so we are in the semi-finals and that is good."

"But it's really important for us to win it. We want to get a trophy as soon as we can."



SEE PAGE 70

Bookies say UEFA Cup tie was 'fixed'

A MASSIVE multi-million-pound worldwide betting scam may have fixed a UEFA Cup match.

Hordes of punters all round the globe put money down at odds of 100-1 for Greek side Panionios to beat Dinamo Tbilisi 5-2 in Athens on Wednesday. And it happened.

And so much cash poured in for the Greeks to be losing at half-time before winning that the odds were slashed from 33-1 to 5-1 before bets were suspended.

Last night British bookmakers were demanding a UEFA

investigation into exactly what went on in a bid to discover whether this was the biggest and most blatant match fix ever.

Unhappy

It is the latest in a stream of matches involving eastern European clubs that have left bookies unhappy.

And they are demanding action to keep the game straight.

Alarm bells started ringing at Corals when a punter walked into a shop and

asked to place a £1,000 bet on the game. Dave Stevens, Corals spokesman, said: "We only allowed a £50 stake."

"And then we made some investigations and decided to suspend betting."

"After that, some of our traders watched this match and said it was the most comical staging ever."

"After half time when Tbilisi re-took the lead 2-1,

Turn to Page 78

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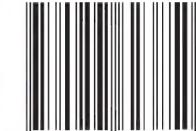


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WENGER ADMITS: WE'RE ON THE SIDE

GUNNERS ARE MISFIRING: And boss Arsene Wenger has to raise his squad's morale before their showdown with Chelsea



by DAVE ARMITAGE

ARSENÉ WENGER last night admitted Arsenal may be past their peak.

And the Gunners boss says he's worrying about why his team are sliding out of the title race and what he can do about it.

Wenger's frank admission followed Wednesday's Carling Cup exit that capped a miserable five weeks since the Battle of the Buffet turned his heroes from the Invincibles into the Jelly Men.

A 49-game unbeaten Premiership run has been followed by just

Turn to Page 79